

Ideology notes 1.0

CK-The main topic and core of emphasis in the new cultural theory is ideology.

-The concept derives principally from Marxism.

But it is also significantly changed and developed by the influence of anthropological and sociological thought and by the influence of psychology, particularly Freud's psychoanalysis.

5As it has actually developed, the concept has been used in so many contexts and in marshalling such different arguments in such different fields of discussion, that it sometimes clearly belongs within recognizably Marxist thought and at other times it is used in clearly non-Marxist or anti-Marxist positions.

My first concern here will be to establish its general sense within Marxist discussion, although I am also involved in a "revision" of the concept, an expansion of the term to take into account fuller knowledge of and later to explain its development in other contexts.

)Tentative definition: a system of knowing

it is systematic; it is socially created and maintained and has features which are regular and which can be described by abstraction.

it involves knowing; perception involving all the senses, cognition, and analysis or formulation directed toward individual understanding and (by implication) social action. Cognition is here understood as involving conscious and unconscious processes.

[therefore we could say that ideology is a term for the social construction of consciousness

As it has developed, there is a very narrow and specific view of ideology which sees it as a very specific set of ideas such as a philosophy or a set of religious doctrines. There is considerable foundation in Marxism for this concept, stemming from M&E's The German Ideology, which essentially takes up such a position. This is also the way the term has been used in mainstream Western political/social analysis.

However the term can also be broadened out to be seen as a necessary structural condition of society: ideology as an essential part of how people are able to cohere as social beings. This also stems from Marx: in particular the first chapter of Capital, in which Marx discusses commodity fetishism, that is how in capitalist society people do not understand certain relations as social relations but instead see them as relations between things.

6 Some basic assumptions on the way to defining ideology

G1. Ideology is not simply a philosophy or a set of specific doctrines.

ethough it may be partially represented systematically by a philosophy, religion, or secular doctrine.

M2. Ideology is a system of representation evolved by a specific social group

for classical Marxism this most often concerns class, defined in Marx's sense by the relation of a group of people to production (that is economic production; specifically in capitalist society the production of surplus value).

c3. Ideology is a social phenomenon based on historical reality and the material processes of life.

} "based on" does not need to mean directly derived from but it does indicate a relationship which can be understood in general

4. Part of ideology is based on, related to, reality; at the same time ideology misrepresents that reality, often by omission.

5. Ideology is not static but always in-process, in change, and open to simultaneously holding opposites in a dynamic tension. (see discussion of dialectics)

t6. Ideology does not present the true relation of people to their conditons of existence, but rather a changed one.

the exact term or metaphor used is significant: false/imaginary/inverted/distorted relation. EAch term has a different meaning and implies a somewhat different understanding.

@7. Ideology operates on both a conscious and unconscious level.